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EMPLOYEE GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING...



United States
Department of
Agriculture



National Agricultural Library

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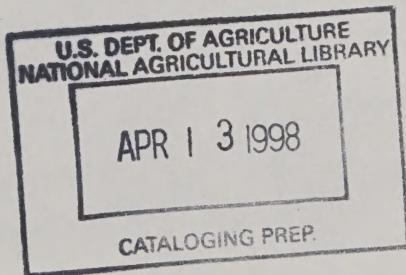
TO: All New Employees

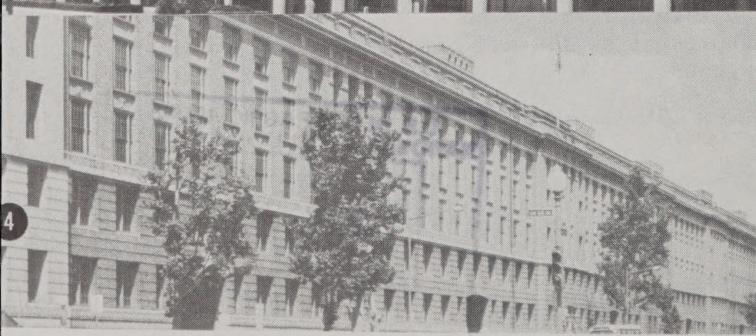
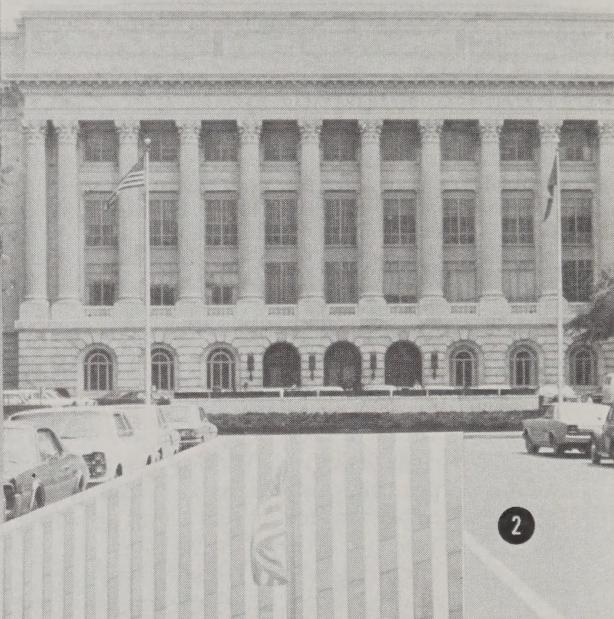
Welcome to ERS. I invite you to take the time to acquaint yourself with this booklet. It will introduce you to the organization of the Economic Research Service and to our personnel policies. Your supervisor will continue this orientation by explaining what's expected of you on the job. As the final stage of your orientation, I want to encourage you to seek answers to any questions you may have. Your supervisor, Employment Counselor, Administrative Officer, and the EMSC Personnel Division will be glad to help you. Some of the technical services and support facilities mentioned in this publication relate to Washington based employees. However, in most cases the services and facilities are available to non-Washington employees. I would suggest that you contact your Senior Representative on any questions concerning availability of services for non-Washington employees.

Working in ERS. During the past several years, we have been greatly challenged as an agency. Other Government agencies and the public have turned to us for the answers to pressing questions about agriculture. Our workload has increased, and the merits of our work have been tested often. I am proud of the way ERS employees have risen to this challenge, and of the cooperative spirit they have maintained under these demands. I look forward to your contribution to this spirit. I hope that your job will challenge your present skills and offer you an opportunity to develop new ones.

Quentin West

QUENTIN M. WEST
Administrator





1. U.S. Capitol. 2. USDA's Administration Building. 3. USDA - ERS's GHI Building. 4. USDA's South Building. 5. Washington Monument.

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2. Departmental Personnel Manual	Management Assistant, OA
3. EMSC Manual	Administrative Officer
4. Departmental Administrative Regulations	Administrative Officer and Management Assistant, OA
5. ERS Program and Organization Manual	Division Director and Program Leaders
6. Agency MIS Documents	Assistant Administrator
7. Division MIS Documents	Division Director
8. ERS Memorandums	Division Director Administrative Officer
9. Merit Promotion Plan	Administrative Officer
10. Agency Publications	Division of Information

PART I: ALL ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION

HISTORY

The Economic Research Service was organized April 5, 1961, but its history can be traced to 1839 when the Office of Patents received an appropriation of \$1,000 for collecting agricultural statistics, conducting agricultural investigations, and distributing seeds. The Patent Office issued estimates for agricultural production, using the 1840 census as a base, for a number of years. In 1862, the Department of Agriculture was established. The establishing law directed the Commissioner of Agriculture to "acquire and preserve in the Department all information concerning agriculture which can be obtained by means of books and correspondence . . . by the collection of statistics and by any other appropriate means . . ."

In 1863, USDA began publishing statistical reports on crop conditions and agricultural production. These data were used in making various economic analyses. At first, this work was scattered among several bureaus and offices, but later the work was combined. In 1903, the Bureau of Statistics was organized, followed by the Office of Farm Management in 1905, and in 1913 the Office of Markets and the Rural Organization Service were established. There were other changes before the 1920's. But in 1922, a major change took place with the establishment of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE).

Establishment of the BAE represented continuing development of economic research, regulatory, and service work; but it also represented an important response to a critical economic crisis for farm people. Secretary of Agriculture Henry C. Wallace told the President in his 1922 report that farmers, despite their hard work and large production, found themselves still laboring under a terrible disadvantage as compared with other groups in the Nation. Food in superabundance would, he wrote, contribute to the prosperity of business and industry for a time but the farmers' inadequate returns would result in readjustments in the number of people on farms and in the cities, which would not be "for the continuing good of the Nation."

The Secretary defined the objective of the new Bureau as inquiry into "every economic condition which has an influence upon either production or price . . ."

Originally, the BAE had three production divisions, eight marketing divisions, and the divisions of Agricultural Finance, Statistical and Historical Research, Agricultural Cooperation, Farm Population and Rural Life, and Land Economics and Information.

At first, BAE emphasized the collection and analysis of data pertaining to production, price, and marketing of farm commodities. In order for the farm people to get the research data, the Bureau in 1923 started a series of annual outlook conferences. Henry C. Taylor, the first Bureau Chief, hoped that outlook conferences and research publications would enable farmers to plan their crops not on the basis of price at planting time but on the probable selling price.

It was hoped that by providing this information the necessary readjustments would take place. But agricultural conditions did not improve and Secretary Wallace pushed Taylor to consider more drastic measures to improve farm income and prices. The Bureau helped to draft legislation known as the McNary-Haugen Plan to bring about "equality for agriculture." As a result of this legislation and Secretary Wallace's death, Henry C. Taylor was replaced as Chief of the Bureau in 1924.

After the McNary-Haugen plan failed to secure Presidential approval, the Bureau began to place more emphases on marketing research and cooperative marketing. This inturn led Congress to replacing the Division of Agriculture Cooperation with the Division of Cooperative Marketing in 1926. In addition to research in marketing, more funds and personnel were being used for marketing services and regulations which had been important functions of the Bureau since its beginning.

In 1929, the Federal Farm Board was established outside the Department of Agriculture to encourage stabilization of agricultural prices through cooperative marketing. The BAE's Division of Cooperative Marketing was transferred to the Board.

The Federal Farm Board relied on the BAE for most of its research data. The Bureau's fact-collecting and research activities were broadened in response to the Board requests. And inturn, funds from the Board were transferred to the BAE to improve the outlook and research work.

The Federal Farm Board asked the Department to set up an adequate foreign agricultural service and provided financial support to expand the work on foreign markets which had been done by the Division of Statistical and Historical Research. The Bureau set up the Foreign Agricultural Service Division in 1930. Responsibility for foreign work was transferred to the Office of the Secretary in 1938, and in 1939, it was renamed the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations.

During the depression, economic analysis became essential because many new programs were initiated to help farm people. Farm income studies and work on the parity concept were important to policy formulation and program implementation. For example, BAE recommended that farmers could move more surplus foods and poor people could eat better if USDA supplemented direct donations of food with food stamps. Food stamps were issued from 1939 through 1943, and were reinstated in 1961.

In 1938, BAE was reorganized and was given Department-wide responsibility for planning. Research work was integrated with the planning of programs, but responsibility for marketing and regulatory programs was transferred to other agencies. Farmers were encouraged to participate in the planning process through the organization of State and county planning committees, but this ended in 1942 by direction of Congress. In 1945, the Bureau's responsibility for Department-wide planning in Washington was transferred to the Office of the Secretary.

During World War II, BAE was concerned primarily with furnishing data and making economic analyses to be used in planning for maximum agricultural production, meet agricultural problems caused by the war, and planning for the postwar period. Much of the work of the Office of Price Administration and the Combined Food Board drew heavily upon the Bureau's economic research.

In 1945, the Bureau was designated USDA's authorized source of economic information and was directed to supervise and coordinate economic and statistical research. During the next few years, economic analyses were brought to bear on the difficult problems of reconversion and the Korean War.

On November 2, 1953, BAE was abolished. Responsibility for its research on farm management and costs, land economics, and agricultural finance was transferred to the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). All other research and statistical activities, including analytical and statistical work, crop and livestock estimates, and marketing research and service, were transferred to the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). This move was part of a major Department-wide reorganization, designed to bring together the appropriate teams of scientists or researchers to attack particular problems.

A number of leading agricultural economists criticized the abolition of the BAE. Their major argument against the reorganization was expressed thusly: "A Department of Agriculture organized around 'particular problems' is in danger of letting fundamental research 'fall between' and also in danger of running out of the basic background material which is essential to promoting progress in farm practices, and to understanding current problems as they come upon the scene."

The problem approach to research lasted until 1961. When economic research and statistical reporting were brought together as two agencies under the Director of Agricultural Economics. In addition, some work of the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) was combined with the economic research activities. The Statistical Reporting Service assumed from AMS the jobs of making crop and livestock estimates and surveying consumers' preferences.

The Economic Research Service was given all of the economic analysis functions of AMS, the farm economics research of ARS, and foreign analytical, trade statistics, and trade policy jobs from FAS. AMS now was responsible for administering marketing and regulatory programs, including marketing agreements and order programs.

The work of ERS was divided in two, with a Deputy Administrator for Agricultural Economics responsible for the Economic and Statistical Analysis Division, Farm Economics Division, and Marketing Economics Division; and a Deputy Administrator for Foreign Economics in charge of the Regional Analysis Division and Development and Trade Division. The Resource Development Economics Division, later renamed the Natural Resource Economics Division, was added in 1962 and the Economic Development Division was created in 1965.

The present structure of ERS took shape in 1972 and became official in 1973.

MISSION

The Economic Research Service and its predecessor agencies have a distinguished record of providing economic information to the public,

other Government agencies, and Congress. Our task is to supply these groups with background information for understanding the changes taking place in all segments of the U.S. food and fiber system, in rural communities, and international agricultural trade.

The booklet "This is ERS," Program Aid No. 1097, is available for an indepth description of our mission and goals. It is designed to supplement the more formal orientation you received on your first day with ERS. We urge you to secure a copy for your personal use.

The Economic Research Service operates as a separate agency within USDA under the direction of the Director of Agricultural Economics. The Statistical Reporting Service (SRS), Farmer Cooperative Service (FCS), and Economic Management Support Center (EMSC) are also under his direction. We are responsible for formulating our own policy and management practices. However, our decisions are guided by policies and procedure applicable to all Government agencies and supplemented by USDA guidelines. Throughout this booklet, we will reference various manuals which outline these policies and procedures. For your information, we are listing these reference documents and the offices responsible for their maintenance.

Our general mission is to develop and disseminate economic information for the public, Government agencies, and decisionmakers in agriculture and rural America. In carrying out this work ERS:

- Develops and maintains national and world-wide current estimates of the output and distribution of food and fiber and the resources used for these functions.
- Develops short-term forecasts and long-range projections of the production and distribution of food and fiber and other resources used, in light of both probable and possible future events.
- Identifies economic forces affecting the food and fiber sector.
- Evaluates how well the food and fiber sector meets the needs and wants of consumers and of society, and how well the system rewards those it employs.
- Identifies probable and possible adjustments in the food and fiber sector and in rural America and estimates their economic and social impact on all segments of society.
- Evaluates and provides planning assistance on the use and control of water and land resources as they affect economic growth and the environment.
- Maintains current information on the principal social and economic factors affecting life in nonmetropolitan areas and identifies and evaluates alternative public and private actions which have an impact on these areas.
- Provides direct assistance and coordinates the USDA's program of sending experts to aid agricultural development in lower income countries.

- Disseminates economic information on a timely basis for use by individual consumers and decisionmakers in the food and fiber sector and rural areas.

ORGANIZATION

1. How is ERS organized?

ERS is divided into two broad program areas, Food and Fiber Economics and Resource and Development Economics. Each under the direction of a Deputy Administrator. The first area, which focuses on the entire agricultural industry from farmer to consumer, contains three divisions:

- *The National Economic Analysis Division* deals with the entire agricultural sector and centers around aggregative issues cutting across commodity lines. This includes consumer demand analysis; agricultural finance; farm inputs; pricing, policy, and program analysis; structure and adjustments in the agricultural sector; long-run projections; and overall performance measures in agriculture such as farm income, the marketing bill, and others. This Division also is responsible for historical research which provides a background for understanding current agricultural problems, for developing governmental programs aimed at solving the problems, and for developing a wider understanding of the past achievements of farmers and USDA.
- *The Commodity Economics Division* carries out a national program of economic research and analysis, statistical programs, and other work relating to the production and marketing of farm commodities. It includes evaluations of the organization and performance of major commodity subsectors; costs and returns to farmers and marketers; situation and outlook; commodity projections; price spreads; and analysis of U.S. farm commodity programs.
- *The Foreign Demand and Competition Division* focuses on worldwide supply and demand conditions; the impact of U.S. and foreign policies on world trade in agricultural products; and publishes information that traders, Government officials, and trade negotiators need to tap world markets.

The second area, Resource and Development Economics, includes the work of three divisions:

- *The Natural Resource Economics Division* centers its research on the use, conservation, development, and control of natural resources and their contribution to local, regional, and national growth. Analysis of environmental issues is an important element of this Division's responsibility.

- *The Economic Development Division* maintains current information on the principal social and economic factors affecting life in non-metropolitan areas. EDD also identifies and evaluates alternative public and private actions and their impact on these areas.
- *The Foreign Development Division* provides direct assistance and coordinates the USDA's overall program to aid agricultural development in lower income countries. The Agency for International Development (AID) provides most of the funds for the operation of this division.

In addition to the six program division, ERS has two major service units reporting directly to the Administrator. They are the Information Division (ID) and the Data Service Center (DSC).

The Information Division is responsible for editing, printing, and distributing research reports. The Division also publishes research and outlook information as news releases, popular magazines, and radio and television features, speeches, and visual aids. This effort ensures the widest possible audience for our information.

The Data Service Center was created in 1975, to provide overall agency leadership in the acquisition of data for the research programs and to service the management and use of data in conducting research. All ADP service is centralized in this unit.

2. How Are Decisions Made?

While managers are assigned responsibility and authority to carry out specific tasks, persons above and below them usually help make major decisions, by working through a series of interlocking management teams. These management teams are:

- Administrator and Deputy Administrators;
- Administrator, Deputy Administrators, and Division Directors;
- Deputy Administrators and Division Directors;
- Division Directors and Deputy Division Directors;
- Deputy Division Directors and Program Leaders.

The objectives of management teams are to assure a broad range of participation in planning and making management policy decisions, facilitate maximum flow of information throughout ERS, and to promote a sense of oneness within ERS. While it is not always possible, there is an effort to achieve a concensus among managers whose units would be affected by specific decisions.

3. How are decisions made on the research programs and resources at the Division, Program Area, and project levels?

Management teams are used extensively for low-level decisions. While the precise procedures vary from year to year, the general approach is as follows:

Each spring, the Administrator, Deputy Administrators, and Division Directors meet to review possible adjustments in the allocation of funds and employment ceilings for the next fiscal year.

Information generated from specific program area reviews held earlier in the year is a major input to the discussion. Based on the discussion at this meeting or a series of meetings, tentative allocations of resources are made to each division. On the basis of these allocations, along with any guidelines, the divisions are asked to finalize and document project plans. Researchers, project leaders, and program leaders play an active role in this effort. The project plans are submitted to the Deputy Administrators for approval in June or early July. Both formal and informal changes are made in the plans during the year, following review by the appropriate planning teams.

4. How is Management by Objective (MBO) used in ERS?

MBO, as it is defined and used in ERS, is the establishment of specific objectives and the assignment of resources sufficient to achieve the objectives within a stated time period. The purpose of identifying and documenting objectives is to clarify the tasks to be performed by each specific organizational unit. This also allows us to measure performance of the Agency, subunits, and individuals over time. ERS views MBO as a style of management rather than a system. The annual submission of project plans each June in the ERS Management Information System (MIS) is the key element in the establishment and documentation of most objectives.

5. What is the Management Information System?

The ERS Management Information System, developed in 1973, is the formal system for documenting all research and assistance activities. There are four basic elements: The MIS-1 statement provides the long-term objectives for each ERS program area. The MIS-2 statement documents the overall objectives of each individual project. The MIS-3 statement is prepared annually to describe progress on project objectives during the past year and to document specific objectives for the next year. The fourth component is the accounting system. All financial documents, including travel and attendance reports, are coded to specific projects. This information is entered into the Agency's accounting system and periodic reports are provided ERS managers on personnel and financial inputs of the projects.

The objectives of MIS are to provide:

- 1) Data for internal planning, monitoring of plans, and evaluation of the research program;
- 2) accurate and up-to-date documentation for internal and external communication of the research programs by both managers and researchers; and
- 3) an effective and efficient means of satisfying external reporting requirements.

6. How are project proposals submitted and who approves them?

The formal process for initiating project proposals is described in the MIS instructions. Projects may originate at any level within ERS. Persons submitting projects should develop a preliminary project statement. No

specific format has been established for preparing this statement, but it should answer the following questions:

- 1) What will the research accomplish?
- 2) Who will use the results?
- 3) How long will it take to complete the project?
- 4) What are the estimated scientist man-years and fund requirements for each fiscal year?
- 5) Who in ERS might work on this project? Outside of ERS (contracts and agreements)?
- 6) What is the relationship of the proposal to other on-going ERS research? Research of other organizations?

Because projects may originate at any level within ERS, the review and approval process will vary somewhat. But proposals originating at the program area level or below should go through approximately the same process. This includes review and approval by:

- The Program Leader and Deputy Director for the program area where the research would be carried out;
- the Division Director of the program area; and
- the Deputy Administrator.

7. Does everyone in ERS work on projects documented in MIS?

No. The work of the two principal service units in ERS, Information Division and Data Service Center, are not documented in MIS. Each of these two units have internal procedures for documenting tasks and monitoring progress. Work of the Foreign Development Division and work performed by the Natural Resource Economics Division for the Soil Conservation Service is also not documented in the MIS. This work is financed by other agencies and is documented in detail in the financial agreements signed by ERS and the paying organization. Also the work of management units (Office of the Administrator and Division Directors' offices, including Administrative Officers) and unplanned staff work are not documented. Essentially, MIS is designed to document planned *research* supported by funds *appropriated* by Congress to ERS. While the activities listed above are not documented, accounting records are maintained and resources accounted for under MIS.

8. What is staff work?

A major ERS responsibility is to provide economic intelligence to program decisionmakers in the Department, other agencies of the Executive Branch (including the White House), and Congress. The output of the planned research program is often used to respond to specific requests. But requests are also received which require short-term research projects. The resources employed in such requests range from a single researcher to task forces involving researchers from several divisions. While ERS continues to devote most of its resources to the planned research program, staff work is a very important component of the total program. Staff work can be a very challenging and rewarding experience. The nature of staff requests and our ability to respond also provide excellent guides in the developing of research programs.

9. What is a matrix project?

All ERS staff, excluding management and service units, are assigned to program areas. Each program area has a research leader who has responsibility for administering the research projects and maintaining baseline information in the subject area.

Many problems that the Service must address cut across program areas and even divisions. To facilitate the staffing of such projects while at the same time maintaining stability in the organization, ERS uses the matrix project. In a matrix project, a single individual within a subunit is given responsibility for a leading specific project. This project then draws on resources from throughout the Service to achieve the project's objective. Employees working on the matrix project are responsible to the project leader, but they can either remain in their parent organization or be detailed to the division in charge of the project. Upon completion of the project, the employee returns to his parent organization and assignment.

DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH RESULTS

1. The Division of Information works in cooperation with all programs and activities of ERS and helps in the preparations and publication of the many research reports published each year.
2. ERS encourages its employees to contribute professional papers to outside journals, to the ERS quarterly journal "Agricultural Economics Research," and to the specialized annual publication, "Agricultural Finance Review." Employees are likewise encouraged to accept speaking engagements relating to their work and to cooperate in interviews with press and broadcast media. Results of research are disseminated in a variety of ways. They may be distributed internally in ERS as working papers, submitted for consideration as special articles in Situation Reports, and offered for publication as research reports. Results of research are also carried in the ERS magazine "Farm Index" with attribution to the researchers.

3. Information Preparation, Review, and Clearance

All manuscripts and speeches are reviewed at the program area and division levels and then cleared by the Information Division to ensure they meet ERS standards of quality and are in accordance with USDA policy regulations. For help in preparing a research manuscript, see the ERS publication, "From Pen to Print," available from the Information Division. Help in writing a speech can also be obtained from the Information Division. Writing, teaching, or lecturing on your own time must be approved in advance. See ERS General Memorandum No. 32.

PART II: WORKING IN ERS

FINANCES

A. Funding

1. *An Appropriation* – A statutory authorization by Congress to a Federal Agency of the U.S. Government to incur obligations and make payments out of the Treasury for specified purposes and a specified period of time.
2. *Consolidated Working Fund Account* – Established to receive advance payments for work to be performed for the paying agency which ordered work in the same fiscal year.
3. *Transfer Accounts* - Accounts established to transfer funds from one agency to another for the performance of a function by an agency other than the one to which an appropriation is made. These accounts are sometimes referred to as allotment accounts.
4. *Reimbursements* – One agency reimburses the appropriation of the agency which performs the work. In some cases, there is a specific statutory authority for Government agencies to perform services for the public on a fee basis and to credit the fees which are received against the appropriation under which the work was performed. For reimbursable work to be performed for Government agencies, it is required to have a written agreement which specifies the work to be done, the amount of funds to be paid, and the time frame to perform the work. Reimbursements can be received in advance and not classified as a consolidated working fund account.

The budget of ERS is mostly made of appropriated funds. However, each year the Soil Conservation Service *transfers* to ERS approximately \$2 million for planning and conducting investigation studies. In addition, the Agency for International Development (AID), IBRD, or foreign countries *reimburses* ERS for technical assistance and training associated with foreign development.

Although, AID funds represent a large share of the total reimbursements to ERS for research assistance, the Agency does participate in other short-term reimbursable projects throughout the year. However, it is ERS policy to avoid solicitation of outside funding, unless necessary for the support of temporary research requested by other agencies. Outside funding is used primarily to cover the added costs of such requests and not for increasing the long-term size and scope of the Service. In summary, continuing ERS research is supported through the agency budget and not dependent upon reimbursement from outside sources. Exceptions to this policy would be appropriations made to other USDA agencies but earmarked for ERS and activities in support of agencies for international assistance.

B. Your Check

Employees are paid on a bi-weekly basis by the National Finance Center in New Orleans. Salary payments are based on the regular scheduled submission of Time and Attendance Reports to the Center. If a report is not submitted, a check will not be issued.

1. What day of the week should employee receive his check?

Official pay day is on Thursday, however, checks are usually received one or two days in advance of that date. Payroll checks always cover the previous pay period. Inquiries concerning non-receipt of a check should be referred to the Administrative Office. Employees are not authorized to make inquiries to the Finance Center.

2. Who is responsible for submitting Time and Attendance Reports to the Center?

Each major organizational unit has a timekeeper. Your supervisor should advise you of this individual.

3. Are employees held responsible for their T&A's?

Yes. All employees should review and receive copies of their T&A's. Check for accuracy and bring to the attention of the timekeeper any discrepancies. If at any time you are in training and/or use leave, the employee and/or the supervisor must report those hours to the timekeeper. At all times, an employee must check his Social Security Number. An incorrect Social Security Number on a report may cause late issuance of a check.

4. Is it possible to have all or a portion of a salary check forwarded to a designated financial institution?

Yes. The Administrative Officer can assist each employee in completing the necessary forms.

C. Leave Policies

General

1. What is a leave year?

A leave year represents 26 full pay periods beginning with the first day of the first complete pay period in a calendar year.

2. What are leave days?

Leave days are days on which an employee would otherwise work and receive pay and are exclusive of holidays and nonwork days established by Federal statute.

3. What is an administrative work week?

For full-time employees, it is 40 hours per week consisting of five consecutive eight hour days, Monday through Friday. For part-time employees, it is the officially prescribed days and hours per week. Intermittent employees do not have a basic work week.

4. Are part-time employees entitled to leave?

Yes. Annual leave earned is based on the total hours of pay status in each pay period:

4 hour leave category – 1 hour for each 20 hours pay status

6 hour leave category – 1 hour for each 13 hours pay status

8 hour leave category – 1 hour for each 10 hours pay status

Sick leave is earned on the same basis as annual leave, except that all employees are in the 4 hour leave category for sick leave.

5. What is the maximum number of hours of annual and sick leave which can be carried over to the new leave year under usual circumstances?

The annual leave ceiling is 240 hours. There is no limit to the amount of sick leave which can be carried over.

6. Is it possible for an employee to carryover annual leave to the new leave year in excess of the leave ceiling of 240 hours?

Generally, an employee must either "use or lose" annual leave in excess of 240 hours at the end of the leave year. However, under specific circumstances, when such excess leave was scheduled in advance but not used due to exigencies of the public business, illness, or injury, carryover of leave in excess of 240 hours may be permitted. (See EMSC Instructions 3630 for specifics on this.)

7. How does leave without pay (LWOP) effect an employee's leave earnings?

When an employee's absence in nonpay (LWOP) status during a leave year totals 80 hours or multiples thereof (160, 240, etc.), his credit for sick leave will be reduced 4 hours and annual leave will be reduced by 4, 6, or 8 hours depending upon his leave category at the time of reduction. This reduction takes place in the pay period in which the multiple is reached.

Annual Leave

1. Is there a policy on granting annual leave in ERS?

Yes. Annual leave, except for emergency annual leave, must be scheduled in advance and approved by the supervisor. In an emergency situation, the employee should contact his supervisor and/or office as soon as possible to explain.

2. May an employee use annual leave in lieu of sick leave?

Yes. Generally, an approved absence which would otherwise be chargeable to sick leave may be charged to annual leave if requested. However, annual leave may not be substituted for sick leave on a retroactive basis solely for the purpose of avoiding a forfeiture of annual leave at the end of the leave year.

3. May an employee request advanced annual leave?

Annual leave which will be earned during the leave year may be advanced at the discretion of the supervisor.

4. Can lump sum payment be made at time of separation of all annual leave regardless of ceiling?

Yes, employees are entitled to a lump sum payment of all annual leave at time of separation.

Sick Leave

1. Is there a policy for granting sick leave to ERS employees?

Yes. ERS employees are granted sick leave when they are: (1) incapacitated for duty due to illness or injury, (2) absent from work for medical, dental, or optical examinations or treatment, or (3) quarantined by a Public Health Authority due to exposure to a contagious disease. Verbal approval of sick leave for doctor's appointments must be obtained prior to going on leave. In any case, an employee must notify his supervisor and/or office as soon as possible on the first day of his absence to request sick leave.

If the absence is for more than 3 days or if the supervisor feels it is necessary, he may require the employee to submit a doctor's certificate or other satisfactory excuse for sick leave.

2. Is sick leave earned on the same basis as annual leave?

All employees earn 4 hours of sick leave for each 80 hour pay period, regardless of length of service.

3. If an employee becomes ill while on scheduled annual leave will ERS grant sick leave?

Yes. However, the employee must notify the supervisor in the same way that he would on a regular working day.

4. Does ERS have a policy on advancing sick leave?

The supervisor may grant an employee advanced sick leave in cases of serious disability or ailment. The advanced leave is then charged against subsequent earned sick leave.

5. What is the maximum number of hours sick leave which can be advanced?

Thirty days (240 hours). Once an employee has been advanced the maximum, further leave cannot be granted until the balance has been reduced to 20 days (160 hours). Exceptions are not permitted without documented evidence of the seriousness of a disability or ailment.

D. Travel and Advances

Reference: Title 4, EMSC Manual.

All questions on travel and transportation transactions, payment documents, travel advances, and related miscellaneous inquiries should be referred to the Division's Administrative Officer.

WORKING IN ERS

A. ERS Recruitment Methods

1. What are some of the various recruitment methods used in ERS?
 - a. ERS is guided by CSC and Departmental policies as they relate to the actual recruitment process. However, we make every effort to attract employees of high caliber through continuing relationships with universities and colleges throughout the U.S.
 - b. CSC maintains an eligibility roster for each major occupational field. ERS encourages prospective employees to file their application directly with the CSC for placement on the appropriate roster.
 - c. ERS makes available to professional societies information relevant to its research program. The dissemination of this information aids in reaching many potential employees.

B. Appointment Authorities

1. What are the appointment authorities most commonly used in ERS?
 - a. Career Appointments
Most employees receive a career-conditional appointment. The first year of service is a probationary period, during which the employee may be separated if he fails to demonstrate satisfactory performance and conduct on the job. After 3 years of substantially continuous work, the employee automatically acquires career status. Career status gives you status over other employees in the event of reduction in force and provides for easier reemployment should you leave the Federal Service and then return.
 - b. Temporary Appointments
Temporary appointments are limited to a definite period of 1 year or less, and may be full or part time. Temporary employees earn the same salary scales and receive the same leave and retirement benefits as permanent employees.
 - c. Excepted Appointments
These are appointments to positions which have been exempt from competitive procedures. In ERS, this includes persons from outside the Federal service appointed to overseas positions with the Foreign Development Division, temporary appointments of college faculty members, and appointments made under provisions of certain special employment programs (Junior Fellow, Summer Aids, Work-Study Arrangements, etc.).
 - d. Reinstatement
Employees with career-conditional or career status who leave the service may be noncompetitively reinstated to positions for which they are qualified. Career-conditional status provides temporary reinstatement eligibility for up to 3 years after leaving the service, while career status provides permanent eligibility.
 - e. College Work Study Program
The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, as amended by the Higher Education Act of 1965, provides a means whereby public

and private nonprofit agencies can employ college students and receive reimbursement for 80 percent of their wages.

f. Cooperative Work Study Program

Agencies may appoint quality student trainees to positions leading to permanent professional positions. Subsequent noncompetitive conversions of these expected appointments may be made to career or career-conditional appointments. Agencies must enter into a written agreement with the institution.

g. Cooperative Authorities

1. What are the cooperative arrangements which authorize assignment of ERS employees outside the Agency?

Interchange of Employees Under Public Law 918 – This law provides for the exchange of employees with professional or technical experience between USDA and State governments. The major purpose for such assignments is to aid the dissemination of agricultural information and serve as a means of providing solutions to problems arising as a result of interrelationships. ERS Memorandum 32 describes in detail this plan and the proper procedures for negotiating such an assignment.

Intergovernmental Personnel Assignments – The Intergovernmental Personnel Act of 1970 permits the assignment of a Federal employee to State and local governments, including public institutions of higher education. Under this type of assignment, the employee retains basic rights and benefits. His salary must be supplemented to its present Federal level if the employer's rate is less than the Federal rate. In addition, this authority permits the assignment of a non-Federal employee to the Federal Government. ERS Memorandum 32 describes in detail this plan and the proper procedures for negotiating such an assignment.

2. What is a Cooperative Employee?

Cooperative employees are persons employed by reason of work arising under an agreement of understanding with a non-Federal, public, or private organization or individual. Cooperative employees are appointed by ERS only in connection with the performance of functions or activities authorized by law or Executive Order. Departmental Personnel Manual, Chapter 302, Subchapter 8, details the provisions of this arrangement. Specific inquiries for future information should be referred to the Division's Administrative Officer.

C. Orientation

ERS Memorandum 79, revised and dated March 19, 1975, describes in detail our program for employee orientation. In summary, during the first week of employment, the employee should receive an orientation questionnaire followed by an orientation discussion as outlined on form ERS-5 "Orientation Statement for New Employees." Six months following the initial orientation the employee is requested to complete

form ERS-12 "Post Orientation Questionnaire" which is reviewed by the supervisor and a copy forwarded to the Office of the Administrator. As a result of reviewing these questionnaires, special seminars of particular interest to new employees will be planned. In addition, a "get acquainted" session will be held each quarter or as needed with Agency and division officials.

1. When will the new employee receive the orientation forms and related materials?

On his first day of duty. The EMSC Personnel Office will provide each employee with an administrative orientation package which will include orientation forms and other material on the Agency program and mission. Administrative Offices will provide employees with information pertaining specifically to the employing division.

2. Are all new employees required to complete the *initial* and *post* orientation questionnaire?

Yes, regardless of appointment.

3. Should employees receive a copy of their job description at time of orientation?

Yes. A major purpose of the orientation is for the supervisor to familiarize the employee with his job and functions in relation to other positions in the office. If the supervisor does not provide a copy, the employee should request one.

D. Post Employment Actions

1. What post employment actions are used in ERS?

- a. Promotions

Promotion means a change of an employee, while continuously employed, from one GS grade to a higher GS grade, or from a lower salary rate to a higher salary rate within a GS grade.

- b. Temporary Promotions

This is the most usual means of meeting a situation requiring the temporary service of an employee in a higher grade position. It may be used when an employee has to perform the duties of a position during the extended absence of the incumbent, to fill a position which has become vacant until a permanent appointment is made, to assume responsibility for an increased workload for a limited period, or to participate in a special project which will last for a limited period.

- c. Transfers

A change of an employee, without a break in service of one full workday, from ERS to another agency or branch of the Federal Government.

- d. Reassignments

A change of an employee, while serving continuously in the same agency, from one position to another position without promotion or demotion.

e. Details

Details to other positions are made only for relatively short periods of time in accordance with the guidelines prescribed in the EMSC Manual. Details between agencies of the Department or within ERS for more than 30 days must be supported by official documentation. Details to competitive positions except where the position is identical in grade, series, and basic duties to the regular position, may not extend beyond 120 calendar days unless approved by the Civil Service Commission.

E. Performance Evaluation

An important responsibility of every ERS supervisor is to accurately and fairly evaluate the personnel under their direction. Personnel evaluation is just as important as program evaluation and we must do an equally good job in both to assure the future success of ERS. Supervisors have the responsibility of telling their employees what is considered good and poor work, using these standards to measure performance, and applying the appropriate rewards and penalties.

Through the Management Information System, ERS has an effective data base for program evaluation. The same data base could be used to evaluate project and program leaders. Its use is encouraged for this purpose. Each supervisor is urged to develop and discuss with each employee a plan of work or set of accountability factors which can be used to more objectively evaluate performance. It is possible that an assessment of quality and quantity of work performed can become so subjective that supervisors have difficulty in communicating to their employees the basis of an evaluation of their performance.

1. What is the purpose of performance evaluation?

- a. To compare work accomplished against known standards for a position.
- b. To measure production in terms of quantity and quality.
- c. To evaluate the manner in which a job was done.
- d. To strengthen supervisor-employee relationships.

2. How often is an employee's performance evaluated?

Annually, however, supervisors should discuss job performance with their employees on an informal basis throughout the year.

3. What discussions are held on the annual rating?

The supervisor and employee must discuss the rating and those factors considered in the assignment of the rating.

4. Who is responsible for the evaluation of employees assigned to matrix projects?

This evaluation is a joint effort between the supervisor at "home base" and the matrix project supervisor.

5. Where does an employee obtain further information on the performance evaluation system?

The Departmental Personnel Manual, Chapter 430, Subchapter 2, or from the Personnel Specialist in EMSC.

F. Merit Promotion in ERS

1. What is the purpose of a merit promotion plan?

The ERS Merit Promotion Plan provides that promotions will be made on a fair basis in an effort to select the best qualified persons to do the work.

2. Where can I obtain a copy of the plan?

You can obtain a copy from your Administrative Officer.

3. Are all vacant positions and promotions advertised?

No. Promotions and vacancies up through the grade designated as the working level of any given series are not competitive and require no advertising within the Agency or USDA.

4. If a position has known promotion potential to a grade beyond the working level, must the position be advertised if it will be filled initially at a grade below the working level?

Yes. The process must be competitive.

5. What is a working level?

Sometimes referred to a full-performance level and identifies a grade for each series as the level to which each employee in the given series can progress noncompetitively.

6. What document identifies working levels in ERS?

The Merit Promotion Plan.

G. Training and Development

The purpose of employee training is to aid ERS employees to gain effectiveness in their present or future work assignments through development of skills, knowledge, and attitudes. This is important to ERS because we need well trained employees to enable us to fulfill our mission. ERS Memorandum No. 48 to all employees describes in detail the ERS developmental program.

1. How does an employee formally communicate training and development needs and goals to his supervisor?

By completing ERS-18 "Statement of Training and Development" each spring for the next fiscal year.

2. Will employees' statements be acted on by the beginning of the fiscal year?

Yes, each employee's statement is presented to his Division Director by the Training Officer as a part of next year's training budget. Upon final review by the Director, a copy of the statement will be returned to the employee with an approved course of action.

3. Does the Agency support full-time training at universities or colleges?

Yes. ERS will support no more than five employees each year in such an academic program. In order to be eligible, employees must be on the ERS roles for 3 years and hold a career appointment. Reference: Policy Statement No. 1, Memorandum No. 48.

4. If ERS finances an employee's training, what obligation is incurred? Employees receiving non-Government training of 80 or more class hours per enrollment must agree to remain in Government service for three times the length of training.
5. What training is required for new supervisors? All newly assigned first-level supervisors receive 80 hours of supervisory training within the first 2 years as a supervisor; 40 hours of this training must occur either before or within 6 months after entry on duty as a supervisor.
6. Must an employee adjust his tour of duty to enable him to take classes during the scheduled 8 hour day? Yes. ERS employees who take graduate study courses or teach at the university where they are stationed must arrange a nonstandard or part-time tour of duty in accordance with Policy Statement No. 4, ERS Memorandum No. 48.
7. How long must an employee work for the Government before receiving training? Normally, 1 year, however, this requirement can be waived by the Administrator if the training is of immediate need in employee's current assignment.
8. Does ERS provide career counseling? Yes. The Agency counselor serves as a liaison between ERS employees and the EMSC personnel specialists in all matters relating to career development. Reference: ERS Memorandum No. 82.
9. What is being done about leadership development in ERS? The overall objective in ERS as it relates to leadership development is to strengthen current leadership capabilities and provide appropriate training for future leaders in ERS. Development of a program has been initiated. The two phases of the program are (1) develop a procedure to provide current program leaders a better opportunity to develop their leadership capabilities consistent with the requirements of their position and other management positions for which they may wish to be considered and (2) develop a program for identification and development of potential leaders.

H. EEO

It is the policy of the ERS to provide equal opportunity in employment for all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or age. This policy of equal opportunity applies to and is an integral part of every aspect of ERS personnel policy. ERS has developed an equal employment opportunity program to assure that minorities and women receive equal treatment in all areas of employment. The part-time EEO Coordinator has been charged with this responsibility. An EEO committee has been designated to provide management with employee input in the formalization and operation of the EEO program. Coordinators for the Federal Womens Program and the 16-point program for the Spanish

Speaking have been appointed to provide advice to management on the special needs of women and those of Spanish descent. All employees should keep abreast of the EEO program and cooperate with EEO officials and counselors, the coordinators for the programs for women and those of Spanish descent, and the EEO committee. Reference: ERS EEO Directory for designated individuals.

I. Location of Research Staff

The policy of ERS is to maintain a field staff, however, Washington, D.C., is the principal base of operation. Specific location of employees is dependent on where their contribution to the total research effort will be the greatest.

1. What is the policy on staff rotation?

All research staff are subject to rotation to and from Washington.

2. How soon should non-Washington employees expect a Washington assignment?

Within 3 years of employment.

3. Will there be a "critical mass" of research thrust and employment at each location?

Yes. ERS will continually give attention to the development of a critical mass at each location.

J. Foreign Assignments

ERS participates in a program to provide foreign technical assistance to other Government agencies and international organizations. These requests are handled through the Foreign Development Division which is responsible for locating individuals with technical and research expertise needed for specific assignments.

1. How should an employee indicate his availability for foreign assignments?

Advise his supervisor and Division Director and indicate such an interest in his annual training plan (ERS-18).

2. What is the role of the ERS Technical Cooperation Committee and who are the members?

To increase the effectiveness of ERS participation in foreign research and technical assistance by involving all divisions in decisionmaking on requests made to FDD for such assistance. Each division is represented on the committee by two people, one of which is the Deputy Director or the Director.

3. Does an employee who accepts an FC (Foreign Compensation) appointment within ERS have re-employment rights with ERS?

Yes. The employee retains for 2 years the salary earned while on foreign assignment. At the end of the 2-year period, he reverts back to the grade and rate of pay for his last position held in ERS. Credit will be given for any within grade which would have been earned during the period he was not on ERS rolls.

4. Is an employee guaranteed rights to the same position upon return?
No. He is guaranteed a comparable position within the Agency.

K. Employee Conduct

ERS General Memorandum 80 sets forth policies concerning employee conduct and conflict of interest, including financial interests, employment and consulting activities, and honorariums. Departmental provisions relating to conflict of interest are recorded in Appendix I of the USDA Employee Handbook. ERS General Memorandum 80 clarifies certain provisions as they relate to ERS employees. Of particular importance is the policy which prohibits employees from disseminating agricultural outlook information and research results, whether free of charge or not, to any person prior to its release to the general public.

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

A. Building Facilities

1. 500 12th Street Building

a. Access

The lessor's Building Manager is responsible for the security of the building. During regular work days, the building is open from 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Between 5:30 p.m. and 6:30 a.m. on work days and on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays employees are required to show their USDA identification card to the guard on duty and sign the register at the main entrance. During these times, all outside doors are locked except for the main entrance on 12th Street. The security doors on each floor are also locked. To gain access to your office, you must obtain a key for the appropriate security door from your Administrative Officer. A guard is on duty from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. during the week and around the clock on weekends and holidays.

b. Security

All thefts and other breeches of security are to be reported directly to Office of Investigation (OI) on extension 74104. This is a special line installed for your protection. You may also call the Metropolitan Police Department by dialing 9-911. Each employee can help by doing the following:

- (1) Never leave personal items unattended or in unlocked space.
- (2) Pilferage type Government property must be locked down or placed in locked space (contact your Administrative Officer for help).
- (3) If you don't recognize a person in your area, ask him or her to identify themselves.
- (4) Report all suspicious acting persons or articles to OI.
- (5) Reports all missing stolen items immediately to OI.

- c. Cafeteria
There is a public cafeteria located on the south side of the front entrance. A GSA cafeteria is located in the 3rd wing of the South Building. Other eating facilities are nearby in the Forrestal Building and L'Enfant Plaza.
- d. Public Telephones
A public telephone is on each floor on the south wall near the elevators.
- e. Exits and Stairways
Stairways are on both sides of the elevators on the north wall.
- f. Rest Rooms
Rest rooms are located on each floor near the elevators.
- g. Health Unit
The Health Unit is on the first floor, room 193, 500 12th Street. A nurse is stationed at this unit. A physician and a staff of nurses are stationed at the unit in the South Building. The Health Units treat on-the-job illnesses and injuries requiring emergency attention.
- h. Mail Chute
The mail chute is on the north wall near the elevators. Bulk mail may be deposited in the mail box located on B-1 level.

2. South Building
The South USDA Building is between the intersection of 12th Street 14th Street, Independence Avenue and C Street.

- a. Credit Union
The USDA Credit Union is in the 3rd wing, 1st floor.
- b. Welfare and Recreation Association, USDA
The WRA is responsible for promoting general employee activities. Facilities and services of the association are designed to meet the needs and interests of employees. The WRA is located in room 1066 - South Agriculture Building.
- c. USDA Auditorium
The Auditorium is located between the fifth and sixth wings near Independence Avenue.
- d. Cafeteria
Located between the second and third wing on the first floor. Buffet dining is also available in separate dining rooms.
- e. Combined Airline Ticket Office
The Combined Airline Ticket Office is in room 1067. This office provides a service of issuing airline tickets once reservations are made by the traveler's office.
- f. Travel Club
The USDA Travel Club is located in room 1059.
- g. If you are an employee of the Foreign Development Division, contact your Division Administrative Office for information on other facilities housed in the South Building.

B. Transportation

Carpooling and use of public transportation is encouraged due to lack of parking.

The agriculture complex has excellent access to public transportation. The Metro lines have designated stops on 14th Street; at the S.W. Terminal opposite L'Enfant Plaza on D Street, and on Pennsylvania Avenue. Although these points seem to be heavily used by USDA employees, the Metro authority should be contacted for detailed information.

Each year employees who have organized car pools have an opportunity to apply for an assigned parking space in the agriculture complex. Assignments are authorized on a *point* basis. These points are based on the total number of employees in the carpool and point of origination. For further information, employees should contact their Administrative Officer.

C. Banks and Nearby Shopping

1. Banks

McLachlen National Bank
400 12th Street, S.W.
Telephone: 626-0250

Riggs National Bank
935 L'Enfant Plaza North
Telephone: 624-2960

Perpetual Building Association
965 L'Enfant Plaza North
Telephone: 554-3100

First National Bank of Washington
410 4th Street, S.W.
Telephone: 637-6100

American Security Corporation
960 L'Enfant Plaza South
Telephone: 624-4511

2. Shopping Areas

a. L'Enfant Shopping Promenade

Located east of 500 12th Street on D Street, under underpass.
Exxon Service Station can be noted as landmark.

b. Waterside Mall

400 block of M Street, S.W.

3. Notary Public

Service is available in banks shown in this publication and the USDA Credit Union.

4. Post Office

L'Enfant Plaza Promenade near People's Drug Store. In addition, there is an unmanned unit at the S.W. Terminal.

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

A. EMSC Functions and Organizational Structure

The Economic Management Support Center provides management support services for ERS and other USDA agencies under the Director of Agricultural Economics.

Since all technical management support is carried out by EMSC, ERS does not employ technicians in any management support function. Management staff in ERS is responsible for coordinating with EMSC the general needs of the Agency or division and working with the various offices in carrying out management support functions. ERS maintains close liaison with EMSC in an effort to effectively communicate to the Departmental offices certain needs and activities of the Agency.

Functions of the Administrative Service Division includes:

1. Procurement and Property Branch

Space and Facilities

Planning - Design Layouts
Acquisition - Disposition
Utilization
Relocating
Lessor - Liaison

Contracts and Agreement

Specifications
Solicitation Preparation
Negotiation - Award
Administration
Termination

Personal Property

Acquisition - Disposition
Accountability
Utilization
Maintenance
Upgrading
Housekeeping
Visual Aid Support
Vehicles

Purchasing Section

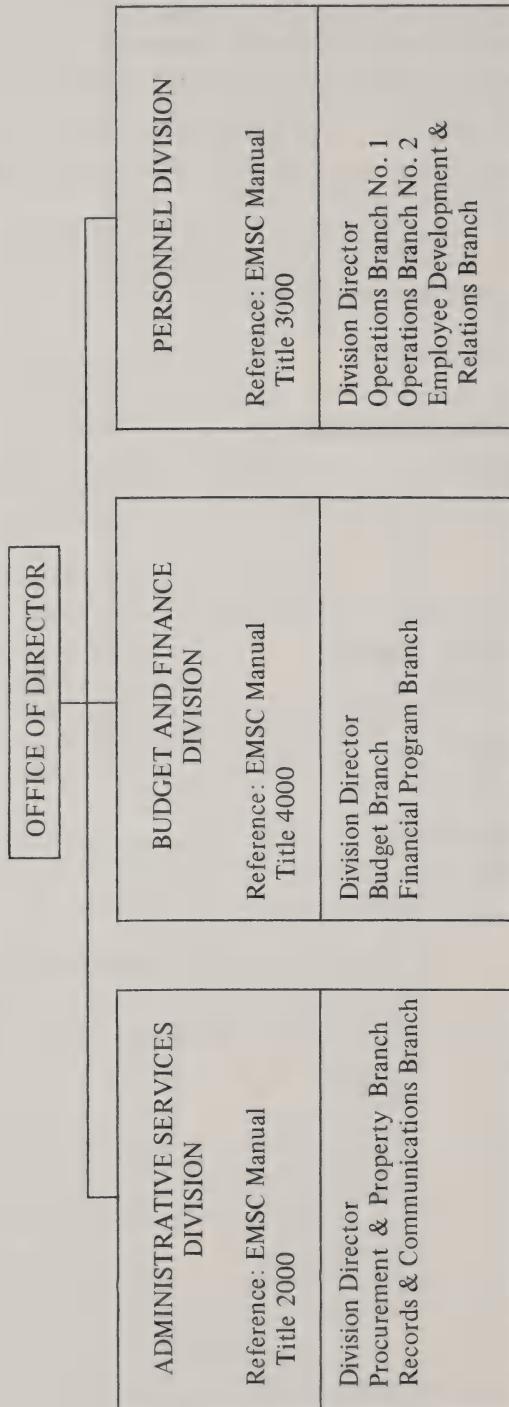
GSA Stores and Depots
Federal Supply Schedule
Local Purchasing
Government Bill of Lading
Move Household Goods

2. Records Systems and Analyses Branch

Paperwork Management

Systems
Directives
Records
Forms
Reports
Correspondence and Communication
Record Services
Word Processing
Microfilm

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE OF EMSC



Functions of Budget and Finance Division includes:

1. Budget Branch

Technical Direction
Formulation & Preparation
Execution
Presentation
Reports
Legislative Coordination
Advisory Service
Liaison

2. Financial Program and Procedures Branch

ADP and Accounting technical assistance
Administrative reviews
Manuals and directives
Work measurement standards
Fiscal and budgetary procedures
Audits and investigations reports
Imprest fund
Workshops and conferences
Liaison

Functions of the Personnel Division includes:

1. Operations Branch

Organization Charts
Job Classification
Position Management
Recruitment
Promotions
Retirements
Performance Evaluation
Pay
Fringe Benefits
Processing Actions

2. Employee Development and Relations Branch

Security
Conduct and Discipline
Grievances and Appeals
Employee Development and Training
Safety
Incentive Awards
Equal Employment Opportunity
Labor Relations
Employee Relations

B. National Finance Center

The Center is in New Orleans, Louisiana. It provides centralized payroll services, personnel operations and statistics, and related services to all agencies of USDA.

All T&A reports are sent to the payroll center in New Orleans for processing. The Center is responsible for requesting treasury disbursement of all salaries paid in USDA. The EMSC Personnel Division is responsible for providing input documents to the Center for update recurring personnel data reports. ERS can also request specific data reports from the Center.

MISCELLANEOUS

A. Attendance at Meetings

Reference: EMSC Manual, Title 1500

ERS employees must receive authorization for attendance prior to departure to meetings. Requests for authorization to attend domestic meetings requires the preparation of Form AD-666. Some domestic

meetings may require preparation of AD-202. In such instances, the authorizing official is the Division Director or his delegate. To attend international meetings, all requests must be approved by the Administrator. The Administrative Officer should be consulted for proper procedures.

Types of meetings in which ERS personnel participate are:

International Meetings - Formal meetings of international scope held in any country. They may be of either inter- or nongovernmental nature and convened by international, internal, or nongovernmental organizations.

Common Interest Meetings - International meetings held in Canada or Mexico which include workshops or similar meetings on joint projects of the U.S. with either of these countries. Meetings of Canadian or Mexican professional societies governed mainly by U.S. workers and on occasion may be held in Canada or Mexico as a courtesy.

Domestic Meetings - National, regional, State, and local meetings held within the U.S. and its territories and possessions.

1. Are ERS employees who are members of professional and scientific societies encouraged to attend and participate in meetings of such organizations?

Yes, when the meetings are of value to ERS or of benefit to the employee's work and attendance is authorized.

2. When does ERS pay transportation, travel, per diem, and registration expenses for attendance at meetings?

The agency may pay expenses if the meetings subject matter relates to ERS work and the employee is invited to present a paper or serve on a panel. Also, if the employee is a member of an essential committee, expenses are allowable.

B. Delegation of Authority

Authorities delegated to individuals in ERS are specified in Titles 1000 to 4000 of the EMSC Manual.

C. Library Facilities

Use of Library Facilities, i.e., Tri-Agency, etc.

1. What library services are available to researchers in ERS?

The brochure, "The National Agricultural Library: A Guide to Services," provides a good introduction. The Main Branch of NAL is located at Beltsville, shuttle service is available from the South Building. Most of the social science collection (about 274,000 volumes), however, is housed in the D.C. Branch, room 1052, South Building.

The material may be checked out from reference librarians on duty to handle all inquiries and requests from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Any request for NAL material or services may be

submitted in room 1052, in person, by mail, telephone, or tele-copier. On hand is a display of current issues of approximately 400 journals. There is also a terminal permitting computer retrieval of material in the CAIN (CAataloging-INdexing) data base.

The reading room in room 1052 has current issues of newspapers and financial information series such as *Dunn and Bradstreet*, and *Standard and Poor*. There is also a large collection of abstract indexes and general reference material available in this room. An ample supply of desks are available in the stacks and the reading room.

For local service to employees at 500 12th Street, the Tri-Agency Reading Room is in room 505.

2. What is the Tri-Agency Reading Room?

It is a facility established by a Memorandum of Agreement among the Economic Research Service, Farmer Cooperative Service, and Food and Nutrition Service, with the National Agricultural Library. The purpose is to provide the cooperating agencies with on-site access to a limited collection of basic reference items and bibliographic tools suited to quick reference requirements; technical journals, newspapers, and information update services selected to provide access to *current* relevant literature. Periodicals are maintained essentially on a current year basis. The TARR also contains a complete collection of all ERS publications.

Materials may be checked out briefly or read in room 505, and inquiries can be made about any material in the NAL collection from the staff person at the desk.

The TARR operates under the overall direction of an Advisory Committee of the cooperating agencies. ERS has six representatives one from each division; and an ERS representative serves as Chairman. Suggestions about TARR policy or service can be made to these representatives.

3. Are there other items of particular interest to ERS researchers?

Yes. Items appearing in the American Bibliography of Agricultural Economics are available as a separate collection in the D.C. Branch of NAL. At the same location, there are special 1969 Census of Agriculture materials available for on-site use. ERS is currently assessing the feasibility of assembling a complete collection of ERS published work.

D. Current Research Information System (CRIS)

The Current Research Information System is an automated system for storing and retrieving data on current research projects in the Department and State Agricultural Experiment Stations. All ERS projects are in the CRIS file.

In the planning of new research, employees should access the CRIS data. The retrieval system will identify what investigations are underway; the progress of the investigations as reported within the previous year; the names of these investigators who are working in the employee's specific line of study and those working in allied areas.

E. ADP Facilities

1. What type of computer system does ERS utilize?

ERS accesses an IBM Model 370/168 computer in both batch and time sharing modes, located in the Department's Washington Computer Center in the South Building.

2. What type of computer facilities does ERS have?

ERS operates only peripheral equipment but has both high and slow speed batch terminals as well as portable time sharing terminals. The high speed batch terminals, consisting of a card reader, printer, and card punch, are conveniently located at 500 12th Street and readily accessible to all Washington-based ERS employees.

3. To what software does ERS have access?

ERS maintains and has access to statistical and econometric software covering the spectrum of current analytical capability. In addition, agency ADP personnel are available to develop FORTRAN and COBOL programs to meet specific user needs.

4. What is the status of ERS ADP capability relative to the current state of the art?

ERS has access to the latest analytical algorithms and a late model computer and is giving emphasis to the development of an automated analytical capability featuring:

- a. the maintenance of data in easily accessible automated forms,
- b. the capability to retrieve, manipulate, and link the data directly to the analytical software, and
- c. the capability to produce useful, and even publishable, reports as the final step in any computer job.

F. Cooperative Agreements

1. What is a Cooperative Agreement?

A cooperative arrangement is a written agreement and amendments thereto which provide for joint undertaking by ERS and other Federal agencies/offices; states, counties, universities and colleges; etc., when necessary, to carry out our research programs efficiently and effectively. ERS and the cooperator/institution cooperate in the project and are mutually interested in the objectives. There should be mutual and shared responsibility in planning and conducting the project. Any agreement with an educational institution is referred to as a research agreement. Reference: Title 1500 of the EMSC Manual

2. What is a Memorandum of Understanding?

A written plan or description of a cooperative and joint undertaking by ERS with other Federal agencies/offices, public and private organizations, and individuals. While there are mutual aims and benefits, a memorandum of agreement is principally distinguished from a cooperative agreement in that each party handles and directs its own expenditure of funds and activities. Further information can be found in Title 4, USDA Administrative Regulations, Chapter 1, Section 5.

3. What is an interagency agreement?

It is an agreement which is authorized by Section 601 of the Economy Act (31 U.S.C. 686) for reimbursement or advance of funds between ERS and other Federal agencies. Each year a significant part of the ERS program is financed by reimbursements from other Federal agencies.

4. What is meant by a "lockup" or "Specific Obligation" agreement?

Money is obligated and work is started in one fiscal year, but will not be completed in the same fiscal year.

5. What is meant by "Extramural" and "Intramural" agreements?

Extramural agreements are carried on directly by personnel of the institution and ERS pays for the costs involved in supplying the research such as a collection and tabulation of specified data and/or development of an analytical report. If any or all salaries and benefits are for employees in research positions, the equivalent of a GS-11 or greater, the agreement is classified as extramural.

Intramural funds are used to pay the institution for research support services. These services include clerical assistance, use of equipment, supplies, travel and per diem costs, and miscellaneous expenses. A research agreement can be classified as intramural only when *all* salaries and benefits are for institution employees in nonresearch positions or research positions equivalent of less than a GS-11.

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